

NASA Glenn Research Center
Cleveland, Ohio

March 11, 2005

TO: Glenn Civil Service Employees

FROM: CF/Chief, Office of Human Resources and Workforce Planning

SUBJECT: Application for Voluntary Separation Incentive (Buyout)

The Voluntary Separation Incentive (Buyout) Plan (VSIP) submitted to Headquarters on February 23, 2005, has been approved. As a result, the Glenn Research Center is now authorized to conduct a buyout with the primary objective being to facilitate the rightsizing and rebalancing of skills in order to better position the Center to be more competitive and play a significant role in support of the President's Exploration Vision.

The Center completed an assessment of the competencies required for our programs and projects for fiscal years 2007 and 2010. This assessment was based on our current understanding of the program requirements. Our most recent analysis identified 28 competency areas where our current staffing levels significantly exceed the outyear requirements. The total buyout will not exceed 248 positions. Our plan for separation incentives (buyout amounts) will, as in the past, be the maximum allowable by law (i.e., up to \$25,000).

Category I and Category II buyouts are described in the enclosed plan. In order to be eligible for a Category I buyout, you must be included in the approved competencies, either as a primary or secondary competency. Category II buyouts may be offered to employees in a competency not identified as a surplus in the buyout plan, who volunteer to take a buyout to create a placement for an employee occupying a position whose competency has been identified as surplus. The Category II buyout is contingent on the placement of the employee from the surplus competency. Questions pertaining to your listed competency should be addressed, through your supervisor, to Mr. Scott Thomas, Work Force Planning Office, at 3-2502.

The application window for the buyout and early outs will open March 15, 2005, and continue through close of business March 23, 2005. Employees to which the buyout will be offered will be notified the week of March 25, 2005. Separations could begin as early as April 3, 2005. Extensions for the buyout/early out, up to October 3, 2005, can be approved by the Center Associate Director for programmatic or organizational mission-related issues. Buyouts/early outs will be approved for eligible applicants up to the maximum number for each specific job category. If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the allowable number for any category, priority will be given to those employees with the earliest Federal service computation dates within the category.

Employees requesting an extension must submit their application by close of business March 23, 2005. The application package must include a justification from the appropriate supervisor stating the mission-related need for the extension (programmatic or organizational). Extensions will be approved by the Center Associate Director and the employee will be notified.

You will be asked to sign an agreement stating that, in exchange for an incentive payment, you agree voluntarily to resign or retire on a specific date. Although the separation is voluntary and generally can be withdrawn by the employee at any time prior to separation, in some cases, the Agency may require an employee to honor his or her agreement and separate the employee with a buyout on the agreed upon date, if harm or disruption to the Agency would occur as a result of the employee's retention. Examples, which are not exclusive, include situations where management has made a commitment to place another employee in the position, or abolished the position.

Employees are urged to take the application for an incentive seriously and be prepared to separate on the agreed date in the event that NASA has a valid reason to deny the employee's request to withdraw the buyout agreement.

The buyout legislation excludes from eligibility, re-employed annuitants, employees in receipt of a specific notice of involuntary separation for misconduct or unacceptable performance, and employees who previously received a buyout under any authority. Employees applying for disability retirement are also ineligible.

Application forms are available on the Office of Human Resources and Workforce Planning Web site at <http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/Buyout/>. You will need to choose **all of the** forms listed for your particular retirement system, either CSRS or FERS. Please download the form packages, complete all of the forms and turn them in no later than 4:30 p.m., March 23, 2005, to the Employee Benefits Office, Building 500, Room 1201. Annuity calculations, as well as the calculation for the Separation Incentive, are available for you to print at the following Web site: <http://benefitstatement.nasa.gov/html/index.htm>.

Employees accepted for the buyout/early out who are separating by April 3, 2005, are expected to report to the DEB Auditorium for Exit Clearance Processing at 9:30 a.m., March 28, 2005. Employees granted an extension will be advised when and where to report for their Exit Clearance Processing.

Employees not immediately accepted for the buyout will be held on a waiting list. As eligible applicants withdraw or decline, those on the waiting list will be notified as they become eligible. In fairness to your fellow employees, we request that if you are not seriously intending to separate with the buyout that you refrain from submitting an application.

An individual who has received a voluntary separation incentive payment under this authority and accepts any employment for compensation with the Government of the United States within 5 years after the date of the separation on which the payment is based shall be required to pay the

entire amount of the incentive payment. In this context, “employment” includes working for a contractor in a way that creates a personal services relationship to the Government. To preclude the creation of such personal service relationships, in previous buyouts the Center has not permitted employees who have taken a buyout and gone to work for a Center contractor to have a duty station on the Center. While the commitment to avoid creating personal service relationships still remains the same, the Center will no longer preclude employees who accept a buyout from working for a Center contractor on site.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has approved a blanket waiver allowing employees who do not meet the minimum 5 years of Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) to continue their coverage upon retirement. OPM will grant pre-approved waivers to employees who have been:

- Covered under the FEHB Program continuously since the beginning date of the agency’s latest statutory VSIP authority, or OPM-approved VSIP or VERA authority; and
- Retire during the statutory VSIP or OPM-approved VSIP/VERA period; and
- Receive a VSIP; or
- Take early optional retirement; or
- Take discontinued service retirement based on an involuntary separation due to RIF, directed reassignment, reclassification to a lower grade, or abolishment of position.

All information and application forms are available on the Office of Human Resources and Workforce Planning Web site at: <http://www.grc.nasa.gov/WWW/OHR/buyout/>.

Questions regarding application for buyout and retirement should be directed to Mrs. Carol J. Mehallick or Ms. Therease C. Ross, in the Employee Benefits Office at extension 3-2507 or 3-8550, respectively.

/s/

Robyn N. Gordon

3 Enclosures

1. Approved Buyout Plan
2. Competencies Included in Plan
3. Addendum

Voluntary Separation Incentive (Buyout) and Voluntary Early Retirement (Early Out) Plan

March 3, 2005

Center: **Glenn Research Center**

Point of Contact: **Therese C. Ross**

Date of Request: **March 3, 2005**

1. Reason for request.

NASA has identified numerous excess competency areas, as well as a need to acquire different skills in a number of areas. The effort to rebalance these skills will take a number of forms, including natural attrition, retraining, realigning or redistributing work, and reassignments both within and across organizations. In addition to addressing skill mix imbalances, accomplishing individual Center reorganization objectives, and supporting mission requirements, FTE and budgetary constraints have compounded the need for a buyout. Relying on normal attrition is not sufficient to allow the Centers to reach desired levels at the end of FY 2006. Buyouts earlier this fiscal year at five NASA Centers did not achieve sufficient voluntary attrition to allow NASA to rebalance its competencies to meet ongoing mission needs, address budget issues, and support the Exploration Vision.

The Glenn Research Center has a previously approved VSIP and VERA. A VSIP/VERA was conducted during the December, 2004, January, 2005 timeframe which resulted in 78 separations from the Center. The first round of buyouts did not yield the anticipated number of 148. The Center has conducted another assessment of the competencies required for their programs and projects for FY 2007. In addition to the previously approved plan the Center analysis has identified other competency areas where current staffing levels significantly exceed the out year requirements. It has been determined that, in order to meet identified programmatic, budgetary and staffing changes, the Center needs to reopen the buyout window.

2. Time period during which incentives may be paid.

Buyouts will be offered upon concurrence of the plan, and separations will occur as early as April 3, 2005. Extensions up to September 30, 2005 can be approved by the Center Associate Director for mission related issues.

Voluntary early retirements will be offered to the same categories of employees as identified in the Buyout Plan and in addition will be offered to those categories approved in the existing VERA. That would include: 1) Scientist and engineers (NASA Code Blocks 2 and 7), limited to 30 in noncritical competencies; 2) Professional Administrative (NASA Code Block 6), limited to 13 in noncritical competencies and; 3) Clerical (NASA

Code Block 5), limited to 7 in noncritical competencies. Separations will occur by September 30, 2005. Extensions for VERA will be approved by the Center Associate Director and will be for programmatic reasons, considering the cost of delaying the separation.

Category 1 buyout will be offered to employees in positions whose competency has been identified as surplus. Those competencies and the number of approved buyouts are shown in the attached spreadsheet. Category 2 buyouts may be offered to employees in a competency not identified as a surplus in the buyout plan, who volunteer to take a buyout to create a placement for an employee occupying a position whose competency has been identified as surplus. The Category 2 buyout is contingent on the placement of the employee from the surplus competency.

The process for conducting Category Two Buyouts will be as follows:

Employees will be informed of the conditions of Category Two and be allowed to make application to the Office of Human Resources and Workforce Planning (OHRWP) at any time during the period following approval of the plan through September 1, 2005, where a listing of applicants will be maintained. The potential losing organization will either submit to the Position Management Board (PMB), the name of the individual identified to be reassigned to the position being bought out, or a request to announce the position using competitive placement or lateral reassignment procedures. Once a selection is subsequently made and the PMB has concurred, a buyout will be offered to the employee.

3. Targeted pool.

Buyout categories (see attached chart for detailed information):

Number of buyouts proposed: 248 (based on current totals identified 2/16)

Number of eligible employees: 1269 (based on current total identified 2/16)

Projected acceptances: 100

Early out (outside the buyout pool): 50

Early outs (within the buyout pool): 49

Number of employees eligible for early out: 440

Projected total early out acceptances: 20

Seven competencies included in the Glenn buyout plan have been identified as Agency critical competencies at KSC, HQ, JSC and GSFC. The job fair was conducted February 24, 2005, in which those competencies were advertised and interviewed for. The Job Fair

was attended by about 600 employees. In these seven competencies we will verify the employee's willingness to relocate.

Competencies excluded from the Buyout include the following:

- Advanced In-Space Propulsion
- Advanced Mission Analysis
- Communication Networks and Engineering
- Nuclear Engineering/Propulsion
- Power Systems
- Systems Engineering
- Acoustics
- Executive Management
- Human Capital Management
- Icing Physics

Propulsion Systems and Testing is included in the buyout, limited to Aerospace Engineers in the 720-04 and 720-60 series. (See addendum)

Budgeting Management will be included in the buyout competency, however, employees in Office of the CFO will be excluded from applying.

4. Impact of buyout and Early Out on the Organization:

The overall objective of this buyout initiative is to bring the Center's and the Agency's existing capabilities into a better balance with its continuing need for those skills. In most instances, positions included in the buyout have been limited to a specific organization and grade. These positions either are no longer required by the Center, are required by the Center but at reduced levels, need to be redefined and replaced with a different skill, or represent opportunities for streamlining where functions lost to the buyout will be absorbed into remaining positions.

5. GRC Rationale:

The Glenn research Center is facing a potential reduction of 700 FTE's by the end of FY2006. Buyouts are the primary method of encouraging voluntary separation. Our strategy is to offer buyouts to the broadest number of competencies.

Our approach focused on the projected competency gaps between now and FY2007, excluding those competencies associated primarily with Exploration and some limitations for the NSSC functions. We recognize that most of the employees that leave will not be those labeled as surplus (excess, unfunded, etc.). Our commitment will be that as people leave we will back fill their position through a series of moves that will place a surplus employee in a funded position. This could apply to a supervisory position. We also recognize that as the center's staffing level decreases our organization structure will change, requiring fewer supervisors, thus, maintaining an appropriate ratio of supervisor to employee. Branches will be abolished or merged and some divisions may be affected.

That may not apply to organizations like safety and health where we would most likely advertise a retiring supervisor's position, fill it from within the branch and fill the second position with someone from a surplus competency. The dynamics of the situation will probably require decisions on a case by case basis.

Addendum to VSIP Request
National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)
Glenn Research Center

Propulsion Systems & Testing is listed in the NASA'S WORKFORCE PLAN for the use of the NASA Flexibility Act of 2004 Authorities as a critical competency for Space Shuttle Return to Flight. The definition, however, is very broad including everything "from general aviation through space access." Those aspects of Propulsion Systems & Testing which address space access are certainly necessary for Space Shuttle Return to Flight. The John H. Glenn Research Center is involved in air breathing propulsion systems which, although defined in the Propulsion Systems & Testing definition, have nothing to do with Space Shuttle Return to Flight and, therefore should not be considered as a critical competency under that definition. In fact, the vehicle systems program is undergoing reductions which makes it necessary to offer buyouts to those individuals involved in the program who also have Propulsion Systems & Testing as their primary competency. We are, therefore, asking for a waiver of the restriction on providing buyouts to individuals in identified critical competencies as it will have no impact on Space Shuttle Return to Flight and will help us address the reduction in the vehicle systems program.

2.9.6 Propulsion Systems & Testing (PROSYS) [68]

Knowledge of conceptual aeropropulsion and aviation systems analysis and testing to assess the benefits of propulsion systems, subsystems and components over all flight regimes from general aviation through space access. Knowledge of the integration of component technologies into conceptual systems. Includes research, design, testing, and evaluation of components systems such as combustors, inlets, nozzles, and turbomachinery, emissions, engine materials and structures, propulsion controls, and propulsion airframe integration. Knowledge of advanced, distributed instrumentation for acquiring improved information in a hostile engine environment. Experience in advanced methods for safe and affordable rocket propellant testing.